

A RACE CRISIS



HOME MISSIONS COUNCIL
156 Fifth Avenue New York

A Race Crisis

The Great War has had a double effect: (a) It brought men together and gave democracy a far-reaching sanction; and (b) At the same time it released a large amount of unrest, of class and group consciousness, and of passion.

Among antagonisms emphasized by both of these effects are race relations—relations between nearly all races.

Here in America the question of rights and privileges for the Negro has come farther North than ever before. It affects the whole nation.

In his report to the Home Missions Council in January, 1919, the Executive Secretary of the Council said:

"The Negro, who has come from the South in throngs of thousands and hundreds of thousands, depleting the southern labor supply, and overwhelming northern social institutions, requires a special ministry, immediate and adequate; and those of his number who have served gallantly in the defence of liberty for this nation and all nations cannot be expected to return to a social ostracism which will deny them the privileges of liberty as determined by personal merit. Grave perils portend, unless the Church of Christ can bring into social institutions the very Spirit of Christ."

On September 4, 1919, the Committee on Negro Work of the Home Missions Council called a conference of representative men of both races, from both the North and the South, to confer upon the situation. This Conference was largely attended. Bishop W. P. Thirkield of New Orleans presided. Through a Committee, consisting of Bishop Thirkield, George Foster Peabody, Robert E. Jones, Kelly Miller, James H. Dillard, George E. Haynes and Charles Stelzle a message to the churches was drafted, which the Federal Council of Churches was requested to issue. The Administrative Committee of the Federal Council of Churches approved this message and sent it out in the accompanying form.

Now it is desired that use of this Pronouncement shall be made as follows:

1. That the religious press shall print it, and refer to its subject matter more than once. It needs to be repeated,

and explained, and emphasized, until its meaning becomes more than a forgotten impression.

2. That the ministers of the Gospel, North and South, shall read it; and in the pulpit, by prayer and appeal, shall bring it home to the mind and conscience of the Church. In the prayer meeting and the social gatherings its statements are also worthy of repeated attention.

We should not only *think* these things, but, so far as they may be put in practice, we should *do them*.

The Pronouncement is this:

A Statement and Recommendations on the Present Racial Crisis

The recent race conflicts in some of our cities challenge the attention of the Churches of Jesus Christ to their responsibility respecting an amicable and fair adjustment of race relations in America.

In the fellowship of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America are included 3,989,852 members of the Negro Churches. In speaking therefore at this time for humanity and justice we voice the mind and conscience of both races. The present situation is a challenge to the churches charged with the promotion of the brotherhood of man, which look upon all men as entitled to a footing of equality of opportunity. This calls for preaching the duty of economic and community justice for the Negro, thus securing peace and goodwill between the races. Beyond all else the present situation calls for confession on the part of Christian men and women of failure to live up to the standard of universal brotherhood as taught by Jesus Christ.

In the adjustment of race relations our country has in this crisis not only its own conscience to satisfy, but also to justify itself as a nation before the enlightened opinion of mankind. As a foremost exponent of the ideals of democratic government, the United States has been lifted to the full view of the world. Our present settlement therefore of race relations will influence in a very large measure the settlement of race relations in other parts of the world.

We must face frankly the fact that a most dangerous inter-racial situation now threatens our country. The problems growing out of the presence of two races in America are clearly seen to be nation-wide and the adjustments must necessarily be made on the basis of national responsibility. The migration of thousands of Negroes to the North emphasizes this fact. The outbreaks in several cities and the persistence of the anarchy and treason of lynch-law imperil our democracy.

The actual practice of the principles of the brotherhood of Christ can prevent such conflicts and nothing else will. The Church must offer the ideals, the program and the leadership in this crisis. The Church must meet its obligation, or leadership will pass not only to secular agencies, economic or socialistic, but to forces that are destructive of civilization.

We must confess that the Church and its ministry as related to the welfare of the Negro has been too little inspired by the fundamental principles and ideals of Jesus Christ. Communities that have expressed horror over atrocities abroad, have seen, almost unmoved and silent, men beaten, hanged and also burned by the mob.

The Negro has ever shown profound faith in God and has always looked to the Church for leadership, for counsel and for guidance. The Church which for fifty years has a record of almost unmatched service in the education and betterment of the race will now be recreant to her trust and lose her birthright of service if she does not meet this confidence with a full sense of responsibility and a full measure of service for justice, peace and good-will. To this end we therefore urge upon the Church, her ministry and membership this constructive program:

A Constructive Program for Just Inter-racial Relations

1. The government, local, state and national, should impartially guarantee to all classes security of life and of property. Mob violence is becoming a crowd habit. When life and property are ruthlessly taken, when men and women are lynched with no protection from officers or courts, law and order are trampled under foot. We call upon the pulpit, the press and all good people to create a public sentiment that

will support necessary legislation for the enforcement of existing laws, that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness may be equally assured to all classes.

2. The Negro should have economic justice, equal opportunity to get and hold work on the same terms as other men, with equal pay for equal work, and with fair working and living conditions. The entrance of large numbers of Negroes into the various industries emphasizes the necessity of an immediate amicable adjustment of relations with white employers and fellow-workers.

3. We call upon men and women everywhere to protect the sanctity of home and womanhood. We record with satisfaction the growing enlistment of Negro leaders in a program of education and Christianization such as tends to prevent crimes that provoke mob violence. The home of the Negro should receive the same measure of respect and protection as that of other Americans, and the sanctity of his home relations should be safeguarded in every possible way. Swift and impartial action of the law should strike the violator of the sanctity of any home, white or black.

4. We recognize as fundamental to the welfare and efficiency of society that adequate recreational provisions be made available for Negro citizens.

5. We strongly endorse the plea of the Negro for equal traveling accommodations for equal charges.

6. Adequate educational facilities for Negro children and youth should be provided not only as a national obligation but also as a necessity for national welfare. We emphasize the urgency of giving to the Negro his full share of local and national funds.

7. Qualifications for franchise should be administered irrespective of race, creed or color.

8. Closer co-operation between the races should be promoted by organizing local committees of white and colored people in towns and communities for the consideration of inter-racial welfare. All possible agencies should be enlisted in fostering a spirit of justice and of good-will in the relations of one race to the other. We recommend that the Governor of each state appoint a standing committee for the careful study of the causes underlying race friction with a

view to their removal and that Congress be requested through a non-partisan committee to investigate the disturbed and threatening inter-racial situation throughout the nation.

Racial understanding and co-operation furnish the only sure basis of race adjustment in a democracy. The root of the matter is the failure to recognize the Negro as a man. The basis of distress on both sides is fear, and "fear hath torment." Respect for Negro manhood and womanhood is the only basis for amicable race adjustment, for race integrity and for permanent racial peace. If we talk democracy, let us act democracy. If we propose a democratic program for the protection and self-determination of the weak and oppressed people of Europe as a means of permanent peace and good-will abroad, let us apply the same program at home.

FRANK MASON NORTH,
*President of the Federal Council of the
Churches of Christ in America*

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